

THE
FAITHFUL PASTOR'S MONUMENT:

A SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

THE REV. THOMAS POMP.

FOR FIFTY-SIX YEARS PASTOR OF THE GERMAN
REFORMED CHURCH OF EASTON, PA.

BY

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SURVIVING PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATION.

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☞ The proceeds of the sale of this Sermon, will form a fund for the erection of a suitable monument, commemorative of our departed Pastor.

S E R M O N.

2 TIMOTHY, 4: 7, 8. —“ *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which God the righteous Judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that wait for His appearing.*”

THE life of Paul as an apostle of Jesus Christ, was one of severe and incessant conflict. Of ardent temperament and intrepid courage, his zeal for the once persecuted, but now most heartily espoused cause of the crucified Nazarene, ever urged him into the forefront of its defence, against the war of opposition and extermination which was waged against it. He had rightly apprehended the nature of his high calling of God. Though he never enjoyed the privilege of that long and intimate personal intercourse with the Great Teacher, with which the other apostles had been favoured, he seems to have been more deeply imbued than any of them, with the conviction, that the natural hostility of the world to the New Dispensation, had converted and would continue to convert, that which was designed to be the gospel of good-will and of peace among men, into a continual occasion of enmity and strife. Looking within him and around him, as he leaned in love and faith against Calvary's cross, he saw by inspired intuition, that, in

a world like this, the work of salvation, whether individual or general, must be a warfare. And never was valiant hero more willing or eager for the conflict. Never was brave and patriotic soldier more patient to the trying hardships of a martial life. Never was self-sacrificing valour more ready to be pushed or to plunge into the most perilous part of the sanguinary battle. With Christ as the Great Captain of Salvation, he was regardless of danger. His heart never failed or feared, even though commanded to wrestle, not only "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." He had been a fierce enemy of the cross. Now he would prove himself a fearless, unflinching friend.

He seems, therefore, to have sat for his own portrait in that sketch of a well-furnished Christian warrior, which he so skillfully draws in the last chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians. And when we look upon the soldier of the Cross there delineated, wearing on his head the helmet of salvation, his heart protected by the breastplate of righteousness, with his left arm holding up the shield of faith, whilst his right hand brandishes the unsheathed sword of the truth, and his feet are covered with the preparation of the gospel of peace, we see at a glance, and say with one voice, it is none other than brave, bold, dauntless Paul himself.

From such a heart, therefore, and through the lips of such a man the words of the text flow in a most natural current. Their harmony with his entire temper and life is so manifest, that the correspondence is at once perceived and felt.

But what propriety is there in employing words of so martial a sound and sentiment, upon an occasion like the present? What agreement is there between the spirit of the text, and the pre-

vailing temper and life of the venerable departed Father in Christ, to whose worth we have now met to pay this additional tribute of respect and love?

It must be granted, indeed, that there is much in the mere outward sound, and more superficial sense of this holy boasting of the aged apostle, which seems altogether discordant with the peaceful character and quiet life of the venerated subject of this discourse. Of a naturally kind heart and peace-loving disposition, few men could be more averse to the bitter bickerings and angry agitations of strife and controversy, than he was. Much rather, if short-coming were unavoidable, would he always fail on the side of gentleness and peace. Far rather would he err in suffering, than in resisting wrong. If driven to the dilemma, he would prefer the guilt of peace-promotive silence, to that of strife-engendering words. In this respect, indeed, his name has become a favourite proverb in our community—a popular synonym for inoffensive peacefulness.

If, therefore, we should pass sentence upon the appropriateness of the text, according to its outward sound and sense merely, it would most probably be rejected as wholly unsuitable to our present purpose. But a man may be a soldier and a warrior, without engaging in those fierce conflicts, in which hostile armies crimson hill and valley with each other's blood. There is a warfare in which the weapons used are not of carnal contrivance, weapons which send forth no confused noise of roaring musketry and clashing swords. There is a sphere of conflict from which arise no angry voices of embittered foes, but where all proceeds in silence solemn as the grave. And well may it be so; for upon this silent, invisible conflict rest, not temporal, but eternal issues. Here there are interests at stake, with which the mightiest empires, were the rocks of their mountains all massive piles

of gold, and the pebbles of their rivers all most precious pearls, would not be worthy of a moment's comparison. Oh! what an inheritance of bliss or woe, depends upon the soul's success in its great controversy with innate corruptions, and the strong temptations of a wicked world!

And this is a warfare which no one can evade, and be a follower of Jesus Christ. However pacific a man's natural temperament may therefore be, and however ardently he may desire and cultivate peace and quietness in his domestic, social, and official relations, he cannot procure, and should never seek a furlough from conflict in this spiritual sense. Ever since sin entered the world there has been such inward contention and strife in every human soul. Sin has made every man a warrior, and every heart a battle-field. And in every sphere of life in which the soul may be called to move, there will be found continual incitements to a renewal, or more vigorous prosecution of the moral contest, in which sin has thus involved mankind.

There is, consequently, great propriety in employing the various parts and circumstances of ordinary warfare between hostile armies, in illustration of what is constantly transpiring in the spiritual world. And there is propriety, also, in applying language in which those illustrations occur, to a case like that before us. For what was above said of the unavoidableness of spiritual conflict in working out the soul's salvation, was doubtless abundantly attested by the experience of that venerable Father whose corruptible body we last Sabbath surrendered to its kindred dust. Both as a *man*, and as a *minister* of God, he must have felt himself summoned to engage in "the good fight of faith." And his choice of the profession, to which he devoted the many years of his long life, especially as the sincerity of that choice was so happily exemplified by the correspondence of his conduct with

it, bears witness to his willingness to pursue the course of moral warfare, to which he was thus early and earnestly called.

For who that was unwilling to "endure hardships as a good soldier," and to fight for Christ's sake, would ever consent to enter the gospel ministry as the profession of his life? Or who that shrank from the turmoils and trials of warfare, would long continue in that profession, even though it may have been precipitously chosen, and unwittingly pursued, for a season?

Only consider for a moment the nature of the ministerial profession, and of the duties belonging to this calling. By their very profession, ministers of the gospel are most openly and solemnly committed against Satan and all his works. For if the kingdom of light is arrayed against the kingdom of darkness, then assuredly they who offer themselves as the special defenders and promoters of this kingdom, thereby pledge themselves to fight for its maintenance, and challenge the special animosity and opposition of the enemies of God and truth. And however retired the place, or quiet the manner, in which one or another individual minister may perform his duties, however calmly and noiselessly he may pursue his course, he still occupies a position of antagonism to error and to sin. This seems also to be a matter full well understood in the world; for to the fact, that they are thus in avowed hostility, more than any other profession, to human wickedness, must we attribute, on the one hand, the respect entertained for the gospel ministry by all good men, and the contempt and contumely heaped upon it by the bad.

Nor will occasions long delay for giving proof of the heartiness with which this profession has been embraced. *In the faithful discharge of his more public official duties, he will find himself involved in unavoidable and continual conflicts. Whether, by his preaching of Christ and Him crucified, he seeks to bring*

reward, of that venerated father of the Church, whose body, worn out with the fatigues of a long and laborious life, now reposes in the peaceful tomb. And from these general considerations, so naturally suggested by the case itself, we proceed to what will have more interest for his many friends, and offer such facts and incidents in this worthy father's life, as we have been able to gather from the material at our command.

The REV. THOMAS POMP was the only son of the Rev. Nicholas Pomp, who was one of the four missionaries sent to this country in the year 1765, and in part sustained by the Christian zeal and liberality of the Reformed Church of Holland, at a time when the Reformed Church of Germany was not in a condition to prosecute, with needed vigour, the work of church extension in a foreign land. Thus generously and piously did the Church of the Netherlands evince its gratitude to the maternal Church of the Palatinate, for the inestimable legacies inherited, in the form of the Heidelberg Catechism and Palatinate Liturgy.

The first field of missionary labour occupied by the Rev. Nicholas Pomp, comprised portions of Montgomery and the adjoining counties in this State, his place of residence being in Skippack township. Here the subject of this brief biographical sketch was born, February 4th, 1773. Here also were passed the few earlier years of his life. In the year 1783, his father accepted a call to the pastorate of the German Reformed Congregation in Baltimore. From this date, consequently, the scene of his youthful years was transferred from the quiet retirement of a country home, to what must, even at that date, already have seemed like the restless turmoil of a thronged city. After having enjoyed such advantages for completing his school education as the city afforded, in due time he turned his attention to

the printing business, and chose that trade as the occupation of his life.

But Providence had marked out another course for him. Accordingly we find him, after his apprenticeship to the trade of his first choice was completed, assiduously devoting himself to a course of study, under the superintendence of his father, preparatory to the work of the ministry.

Although we have no record at hand from which to gather the motives which may have brought about this change of his plans for life, we may safely supply this deficiency, with the reasons naturally suggested by the circumstances of the case. As the son of a minister and a missionary, labouring in a field so destitute as that in which his father was toiling so untiringly, he had the best opportunity of learning the extent and pressing character of the wants of the German Reformed Church at that time. And how could he else than catch some of the self-denying missionary spirit of his zealous father, and have his sympathies even more deeply interested in the cause for which he heard that reverend parent pour forth so many prayers, and to which he beheld him cheerfully consecrating his talents and his strength? In the more frivolous buoyancy of earlier youth, the claims of the Church may have been withstood, the desires of his father may have been disregarded, and the awakening sympathies of his own soul may have been for a while suppressed. But as the more reflective seriousness of manhood came on, he soon evinced the powerful hold which his clear convictions of duty had upon him, and confessed his readiness, seeing that necessity was laid upon him, to consecrate himself to the special service of the Lord in the work of the holy ministry.

Would that the example thus set were more frequently imitated. Greatly as the number of our ministry has multiplied

since those earlier years of her existence in this country, our wants and destitutions appear to have multiplied in a still larger proportion, so that, at this day, the demand for pious and devoted men, to supply the places of those who have fallen at their posts, and to enter new openings that are continually presenting themselves, is louder than ever. The value of an early consecration of children by their parents, Samuel-like, to this holy and important office, and of a corresponding education and training of those thus consecrated, cannot well be overrated. There is a diseased apprehension abroad upon this subject, a sickly fear of forestalling the taste and natural inclination of youthful minds and hearts, which is working mischievously, and requires a check. And this, together with the growing worldliness of the church, and the prevailing lack of family piety, forbid our expecting much for the perpetuation of the ministry in this way. How much more to be desired, therefore, that there should be among our young men, those who would feel constrained by a sense of duty, awakened in the sober reflection of maturer years, to devote themselves to this solemn calling!

The opportunity enjoyed by the younger Mr. Pomp, in preparing himself for his chosen profession, was the best which the German churches, and indeed, for the most part, the surrounding English denominations, of that early period afforded, viz., the private tuition of his father. This plan has been proved, by costly experience, to operate most disastrously upon the true interests of the Church. For one generation it may serve the necessities of the case well enough. Those who have themselves been well drilled by a rigid and thorough course of collegiate training, may supply, in a tolerable measure, the lack of such advantages to others. But these, on their part, and still more again those whom they may train, will very soon betray the utter

inadequacy of this method of supplying the Church with a properly educated and effective ministry. We may congratulate ourselves, therefore, whist we unitedly thank the Lord, that this earlier unavoidable deficiency in the organization of our Church is so fully provided for in the nearly-completed permanent endowment of our collegiate and theological institutions.

Having finished his course of preparation, and obtained license to preach the Gospel, Mr. Pomp was called to the charge of several congregations in the vicinity of the place of his birth, and in the field of his father's previous labours. Of these, he was accordingly ordained Pastor in the twenty-first year of his age. At this period the whole body of the ministry of the German Reformed Church in this country did not exceed twenty pastors.

Of the extent or results of his labours in these congregations, of which Skippack and Towamensing were the most prominent, we have not the means of learning anything of special interest. He remained in this field about three years.

In July, 1796, he removed to Easton, and in compliance with a unanimous call, ratified by the Synod, became pastor of this congregation, in connexion with several others in the adjacent parts of the country, viz., Dryland, Plainfield, and Upper Mount Bethel. According to a statement noted down a few years ago, Father Pomp appears to have been the sixth settled pastor of this congregation and charge. *The first* was the Patriarch WEIßBERG, who, for want of more suitable accommodations, preached in the then newly-erected court-house, and in the country around in barns, or wherever room could be found to shelter the assembly. *The second* was HENON, of whom nothing farther seems to be known. *The third*, in succession, was the venerable INGOLD, whose carefully written records in the old church books of the congregation still remain with us as the monument of his dili-

gence and zeal. He appears to have taken charge of the congregation in 1776, and hence must have been the first German Reformed minister whose voice resounded within the venerable walls of this edifice, which was built in that year. Ingold continued here for ten years, and was succeeded by the elder HERMAN in 1786. This venerable father of our Church is better known as the patriarch of the German Reformed Church in Berks and Lehigh counties, and was called to his rest only a few years ago, at a very advanced age. Father Herman was followed in this place by the learned and eloquent senior DR. BECKER, of whose soul-stirring pulpit appeals there are still some living witnesses in the First German Reformed Church of Baltimore, to which he was subsequently called, after sustaining the pastoral relation to the Easton congregation and charge but for eighteen months.

Once more left destitute, the congregation sought to supply their spiritual wants by calling the REV. THOMAS POMP, who accordingly entered upon his pastoral charge here, in July, 1796, and continued to discharge the solemn duties of that holy relation, until compelled to retire by the infirmities of old age, and the summons of death.

It would be very erroneous to judge of the peculiar trials and difficulties connected with a charge so extensive and widely scattered, as that which Father Pomp supplied, from present appearances and existing circumstances. How vastly these have changed with the territorial and social alterations of the last fifty years! But of these things many of your fathers, still mercifully spared to you, can form a better conception, and furnish a better account than I am able at all to render.

But whatever the duties and difficulties of his field of labour may have been, he seems to have been always ready to discharge them with a cheerful mind. Whether called to minister the con-

solutions of his sacred office at the bed of the sick or dying, or to groups of mourners gathered round the coffin of a departed member, twenty miles northward, breasting the bleak winds blowing down upon him through the Water-gap, or twenty miles southward, climbing the rough hills, and pressing through the thick forests of Williams and Saucon, he was ever prepared to answer the summons. And even in later years, when suffering from a distressing bodily malady, his sense of duty and delight in its prompt discharge were such, that he would not be dissuaded from the regular pursuit of his calling.

Of his character as a *man*, a *neighbour*, and a *citizen*, I need say nothing before so many living witnesses of his excellence and worth. That man whose walk and life, private and public, have been before a community so competent to judge of merit as this, for fifty-six years, and upon whom such eulogies as those pronounced last Sabbath* were universally felt to have been worthily spoken, must indeed have earned for himself a most desirable reputation. The praise of his integrity, amiability, and hospitality is recorded in the hearts of all who knew him. Many years ago, long before I had ever seen him, in the distant home of my youth, I well remember, among the earliest recollections of my life, hearing venerated lips, now also sealed in death, tell of the kind-hearted and benevolent Father Pomp.

And nothing could more clearly testify that these characteristic excellencies were *rooted in Christian faith and love* than his noble conduct in trying emergencies. Our time will allow of reference to only one instance illustrative of this fact. I allude to the occasion of the introduction of the English language into the congregation in 1833. In the perilous experience both of

* The funeral orations of Rev. Drs. Hoffeditz and Gray.

worn-out minister, of a foreign tongue, and antique dress and manners, as he sits under the stoop of his almost forgotten manse, or moves, with tottering steps, along the crowded street!

To the severe test involved in such a change as this, our venerable father found himself subjected in the year already named. And the cheerfulness with which he made the sacrifice, the favour with which he helped forward the self-immolating movement, proved that the virtues which had previously adorned his character, and which shone forth under less trying circumstances, were sufficiently substantial to endure the fire through which they were thus summoned to pass. And it is with deeply grateful emotions, in which I know this entire congregation cordially sympathizes, that I take this occasion of publicly testifying to the noble-hearted conduct of our departed father in this trying crisis. He must have seen that the interest planted in that year was one which, in a little time, in the necessary course of things, would grow up and overshadow him. But he refused not to lend his hand in planting it. And did he not also water, what he thus helped to plant, with the flowing tears of melancholy joy? Whatever nature might feel, or self might say, grace within seemed glad that, for the Church's sake, it should be so. Imbued, apparently, with the spirit of the Baptist, when he declared, on Jordan's banks, in view of Him whom he had inaugurated into His higher office, "*He must increase, but I must decrease,*" Father Pomp hesitated not to offer himself, if need be, as a holocaust to the Church's prosperity.

Shall this example of self-sacrificing piety ever be forgotten among you, my brethren? Shall the noble spirit thus evinced not rather be carefully cherished, and perpetuated to the latest generation that shall succeed to the inheritance of your privileges, and worship within these walls? You have not failed already

to give substantial proof of your appreciation of it. Let the past be an enduring pledge of what the future will bring forth!

As a preacher, our departed father's chief excellency consisted in the uniform and well-sustained merit of his performances, which made them, in his earlier years especially, so acceptable to those who stately attended upon his ministry. But that which deserves particular notice here was the eminently evangelical tone of his sermons. None of the temptations by which he might have been allured from the plain gospel path, which his venerable father had trodden before him, ever prevailed over his faith. Whatever others might preach, or not preach, he was resolved, as Christ's ambassador, to know nothing but Christ, and Him crucified. This is abundantly confirmed by his favourite themes of pulpit discourse. His choice texts were those in which the sum of gospel truth is most clearly and comprehensively set forth, such as, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God," &c.; "In Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love;" "If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above," &c.; "Come unto me, all ye that are weary," &c.; "Godliness is profitable unto all things," &c.; "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better;" and, finally, that which has suggested the basis of the present discourse. This is a specimen of what I found among several large packages of sermons, over which I was kindly permitted to glance. And have we not manifest reason to congratulate ourselves, my brethren, as a congregation, upon the fruits of this faithful adherence to the great and fundamental doctrines of our Church?

That a pastor of such qualities and merits should secure the

esteem of his people will not be surprising. Accordingly, we find the congregation uniting in a public celebration of the *fiftieth anniversary* of his settlement among them, on Sabbath, the 19th day of July, 1846. The solemn and interesting services of that day, the most of you still hold in lively remembrance. The occasion was one which filled the heart of the worthy and venerable man, in whose honour it was got up, with the profoundest emotions of gratitude and joy. This is touchingly exhibited in the brief address which he delivered upon the presentation of the superb German Bible, handed to him as a token of the congregation's regard and love. From this, I translate the following significant sentiment :

“‘Hitherto the Lord hath helped us.’ Thus spake that ancient servant of God, as he set up the monument in Ebenezer, in commemoration of victories achieved over the enemies of his people. We, too, have been permitted, beloved, to march together on our earthly course for half a century. Together we have passed through many a melancholy vale ; but have also had our seasons of delight, in the enjoyment of many mercies at the hand of the Lord. These we celebrate together upon this solemn festival day, on which, in view of the past, we, too, feel constrained to say, ‘Hitherto the Lord hath helped us.’ And now, beloved brethren and sisters, the God before whom our fathers walked, the Lord whose wings have overshadowed and protected us so graciously hitherto, the Angel of the Covenant who redeemeth us from all evil, and hath guided us thus far, will help us still, and keep us steadfast in His grace until we finish our course. Yea, my brethren, we may assuredly hope for every needful good, if we but fear and trust the Lord, and continue in the faith of Jesus Christ, ‘the author and finisher of our

faith,' true unto death,—which the Lord grant unto us all. Amen."

For four years after this date, Father Pomp continued in the discharge of his public ministerial duties in this place; when, in view of increased bodily infirmities, a proposition was made to him to retire from the active duties of his office, nevertheless retaining his official relation as Pastor during his life. To this proposition, after some natural hesitation, he was pleased finally to accede, continuing in the solemn, time-honoured, and endearing pastoral relation to the congregation, until at length death came, and without inflicting one apparent pang, dissolved the holy bond, early in the morning of April 22d, 1852, in the eightieth year of his age, the sixtieth of his ministry, and the fifty-seventh of his Pastorate in Easton.

Thus closed, in a sudden death, but one that was as calm and peaceful as his life had been, the long and benevolent career, of one who, for nearly three score years, had pursued the pious duties connected with the office of the gospel ministry. Few lives so unusually prolonged, so necessarily open to public inspection, and so constantly exposed to trying and vexatious temptations, as a life devoted to his holy profession invariably is, have been so unexceptionably spent, and have won on every side so much favour, and such cordially cherished regard. Few deaths have spread such general and sincere sorrow, among so many hearts in this community and county, as the demise of this departed servant of the Church. Affectionate in his disposition, prompt in the performance of his ministerial duties, loath to chide, and ever choosing rather to cheer and encourage, he naturally bound to himself the multitudes that constituted his wide pastoral field, in the earlier and later years of his ministry, with the strongest and tenderest cords of love. How could the generations upon

whose heads he had sprinkled the water of holy baptism—so strongly and appropriately emblematical of the fulfilment of the promise, “I will sprinkle clean water upon them, and they shall be clean”—how could the generations who sought, with solemn confessions of sins repented of, and faith in Christ as the atoning Lamb, and promises of faithfulness unto death, the divine *confirmation* of the blessings pledged to them in infancy—how could the generations that had so often received at his hands the consecrated bread and wine of the holy supper—else than look with filial affection to one who had been so like a father to them in spiritual things?

And the crowds that gathered in from every side on Sabbath last, to pay the last tribute of their love at the grave of their departed Pastor, proved that they were not insensible to influences of such a good man's life and labours upon their hearts.

What an honour, yea, and what consolation even to be the bereaved widow and children of such a husband, and of such a father! Your loving appreciation of his worth, afflicted Mother, Brothers, and Sisters, may indeed, make you the more keenly sensible to the pang of separation; but how soothing also your recollection of the many domestic and social virtues which made him what he was to you! How much has he left behind him to form sources of comfort for your sorrowing hearts! How peculiarly precious to your hearts must this house of worship, and this sacred pulpit be, both which must ever continue in your minds, in pleasant, though chastened, association with that venerated form, which for so many years filled the one, and that solemn, familiar voice, which so often resounded through the other! May the God of your husband, and your father, and of your father's Church, abundantly sustain you under the burden now bearing down your spirits, and sanctify your venerated

father's useful life, and peaceful death, to your eternal welfare!

How great the honour, finally, and, I may add, how heavy the responsibility too, to have been for so long a term of years, the *congregation* of such a Pastor! Many of those to whom he ministered during that protracted period, went before him to judgment! Many are awaiting the summons to follow him, expecting to hear it soon. Ere long all will be gathered together, as they were often here, before the presence of the Searcher of hearts, and Judge of our souls. Oh! that none may find him, who bare witness unto them concerning all the words of eternal life, set forth in the gospel, a condemning witness against them on that solemn day!

Beloved brethren, let us labour together with redoubled diligence in the Good Shepherd's service, that the blessed fruits of ministrations so faithful and untiring, as you have hitherto enjoyed, may be more abundantly produced than ever, in your future history. True and good has been the seed of truth and righteousness, which has been unsparingly sown upon this field. Many hundred-fold harvests prove that the soil was worthy of the toil and tears bestowed upon it.

The first Pastor's grave-mound has been reared among you. Come then, and renew over the solemn pile, *your covenant*, never to forsake the God whom he it covers served, nor the gospel which he preached, nor the church which he loved even unto the day of his death!—AMEN.